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March 16, 2001

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State Agricultural Development Board Approves \$456,000 for Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board voted today to approve a \$456,000 grant request submitted by the Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative in Georgetown. The award will go to purchase equipment needed by the produce marketing cooperative to expand its production and marketing efforts, including an expansion of their grading lines, cooler capacity, and other marketing related equipment.

Governor Patton praised the Board's action to boost the efforts of producers in Scott and surrounding counties to explore alternative crops to replace lost tobacco income.

"This action means that the Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative will be able to better meet the needs of their customers in marketing their products this year and in the future. While this money will be spent on equipment, it is an investment in an aggressive group of producers looking for income alternatives, in their agricultural diversification efforts, and in the future of agriculture in one of our state's most tobacco-dependent areas," said Governor Paul Patton.

The award was made as one of eleven projects approved by the Board during its meeting today. The Board approved a total of \$4,443,000 in state level projects, including the Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative, and \$403,600 in a variety of county-level programs.

"Kentucky's produce industry has a tremendous amount of untapped potential," Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith said. "This funding will help vegetable growers in central Kentucky achieve that potential."

"This grant will allow us to expand to the point where we are self-sustaining," Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative President Kevin Evans said. "Our operation will be efficient enough to demonstrate to farmers that there are alternatives to tobacco."

Staff of the Agricultural Development Board will meet soon with the Central Kentucky Growers Cooperative Board of Directors to work out the details for the proposed expansion. The commitment by the Board comes at just the time the Cooperative needs to purchase the new equipment to take full advantage of the coming growing season.